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THE FLEMISH PHYSICAL THERAPY EDUCATION IN MENTAL HEALTH.

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In the Flemish part of Belgium the higher education of physical therapy is instructed at three universities: the U Gent, the VU Brussel and the KU Leuven. To graduate in the Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science, two consecutive study programs have to be followed. Bachelor programs are the first stage of university education and consist out of 3 years. The master program (Master in Science) is spread over 2 years and prerequisites a broad theoretical knowledge and basic practical skills.

All students in physiotherapy follow a 'basic truncus' in their bachelor years and the first master year that consists out of different courses in several domains: human sciences, movement sciences/kinesiology, rehabilitation sciences in the different domains of specialisation (musculoskeletal, neurology, cardio-respiratory, internal disorders, paediatrics and mental health) and research methodology. Mental health courses are integrated in both in the bachelor and master program.

Only at the KU Leuven, students can choose to graduate in the 'Rehabilitation sciences and Physiotherapy in mental health care'. Since 1962, this specialisation was started and evaluated during the last fifty years. Today, the major aim of this study track, which is mainly given in the second year of the master programme, is to train physiotherapists in the expert knowledge, insight, skills and professional attitude needed in rehabilitation sciences and physiotherapy in mental health.

The courses consist of psychopathology of children, adults and elderly; psychomotor therapy in children, adolescents, adults and elderly; advanced evaluation and treatment methods; mental health and advanced issues in primary mental health care and an internship.

The physiotherapist specialised in mental health is able to apply evidence-based physiotherapy in both global health care and mental health care. He/she is able to develop patient assessment and intervention programmes through clinical reasoning and critical scientific reflection. He/she is able to set up and conduct clinical and applied research independently.

For more information: see www.kuleuven.be/ma/MAREHSCPH